Has food ever felt this good?

These felt lobsters are among Tara Davies' range of "foods" that are being snapped up.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"] W [/dropcap]hen **Tara Davies** began stitching and sewing items to sell at her first market, she didn't expect some of her best customers to be five year olds.

Yet it is Tara's range of "felt food" that has since been flying off her market stall like hot cakes or perhaps, more specifically, felt cup cakes, or felt gingerbread men …

Each piece of felt food is hand made by Tara, right down to hand stuffing each individual yolk of the fried eggs, and her stall can sometimes look more like a grocery stand than a purveyor of crafts.

The kids and their parents, it seems, can't get enough of the fake fruit, steak, vegetables, seafood and pasta that might be

inedible, but feels a lot better than plastic and is far more cuddly. More mature folk have also been known to snap up a lobster or a slice of watermelon just because they can't resist touching them.

Tara, from Portland, comes from a family who have always enjoyed making things and her grandmother, in particular, loved painting, drawing and crocheting.

But like many women who have moved into the craft market scene, Tara started sewing a range of items just for fun and decided to sell a few online as **Sewww Pretty Handcrafted Gifts and Homewares** before trying out her own stall in the middle of last year.

"The response and feedback at the markets has been just amazing and it has gone in ways that I never, ever expected," she said.

Tara Davies is reviving some of the crafts of yesteryear, like scrappy mats made from recycled fabrics.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"] A [/dropcap]side from the felt food, Tara's hand-sewn heat packs and her version of the "scrappy mats" that were once so popular in the 40s and 50s have proven to be winners.

The scrappy mats are made from recycled fabrics such as denim, felts or silks that are cut into strips and hand-knotted onto a backing mat. A small mat can involve up to 6000 individual pieces of material and take 10 days to complete, while the larger mats use up to 10,000 pieces: that means tying 10,000 knots.

"They are very time consuming, but luckily I find it relaxing and I can work on it in front of the TV," Tara laughed.

The scrappy mats are also a direct link back to the crafts her grandmother did as a younger woman, when women would tear up old towels to make a "new" bathmat: who ever said up-cycling was a new concept?

Zero cholesterol and pure fun: the hand-stuffed and sewn fried eggs.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DDCE8D;"] W [/dropcap]hile Tara has been delighted with how well her crafts have been received, she now suffers from a common complaint among her peers and that is finding the time – and space – to keep up with demand.

"My craft room is getting overloaded and I have already moved the sewing machine into the lounge room," she said with a laugh.

Fortunately Tara's boss – Sobey Services, where she has worked as office manager for the past 10 years – is understanding when it comes to occasionally needing flexible hours to prepare for a market.

"It never feels like there is enough time – if only we didn't have to sleep!"

A heat pack or a hoot pack?

[box] Tara appears at various markets around the south-west region and you can find her on Facebook here. [/box]

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